

# About Our School Program

## History of our program

Student health and safety is an important issue to the community and to Spokane Regional Health District's (SRHD) school program. Our work with the school community is not new; we have conducted K-12 school inspections since the 1950s. Our most recent changes to the school program include the formation of the School Advisory Committee and the addition of a self-inspection program.

## What we do

### School inspections and reinspections

School inspections address health and safety issues such as lighting, ventilation, and general health and safety hazards. Elementary school inspections also concentrate on playgrounds and arts and crafts. Secondary school inspections focus on areas such as science labs and career/technical education.

### Construction activities

Staff conduct site evaluations and review plans for proposed school construction projects. After completion, pre-occupancy inspections are conducted prior to student use.

### Complaint response/illness investigation

Staff respond to complaints alleging unsafe/unhealthy school conditions.

### Consultation

Consultations are provided to schools on health and safety issues.



Other Environmental Health programs are also involved with schools. For example, food program staff inspect school kitchens and special school events where food is served; the liquid waste program addresses small on-site sewage disposal systems at schools.

## Frequency of routine inspections

School inspection frequency depends on school participation in our self-inspection program. Participating schools are on a three-year cycle of routine inspection, reinspection, and self-inspection. Schools choosing not to participate are on a two-year cycle and are inspected every other year; a reinspection is conducted the alternate year.

## Program staff & schools served

The school program is staffed by approximately 1.3 FTEs, which includes two shared inspectors, one shared technical advisor, and shared clerical and management support.

Total number of schools	209
• Public schools	144 (14 school districts)
• Private schools	52
• Parochial schools	13
Total number of students	> 72,000 (> 69,000 in public schools)

Data in table is approximate

## Funding sources

A fee for service (currently \$70/hr) is charged for activities such as inspections, reinspections, and construction activities. There is no charge for complaint response, illness investigation, or consultation. The school program is additionally supported by general fund dollars, i.e., state allocation and contributions from Spokane County.



## Relationship with school districts Successes

### School Advisory Committee

A 10-member committee assists the school program in the development of program-related policies and procedures, including inspection frequency/content and the costs involved, training, compliance recommendations, and the development of educational materials. Committee members are the liaisons between SRHD and the school community.

### Self-Inspection Program

Our self-inspection program was created by the School Advisory Committee. The program has developed better communication and consistency between SRHD and schools, given schools more program ownership with the ability to control costs, and has ultimately created safer, healthier schools. Participating schools sign a participation agreement, send a representative to annual training, and complete/return self-inspection forms within prescribed timelines.

### Collaborative workshops

SRHD has partnered with the school community (the advisory committee, ESD101, WAMOA, etc.) to offer many training opportunities on topics such as science safety, indoor air quality, playgrounds, etc.

## Challenges

- ♦ Knowledge needed for the school program is very broad, very detailed, and constantly changing. SRHD is fortunate to have excellent resources available (ESD101, L&I, Building Departments).
- ♦ The school program is consultative in nature. Most school inspection issues are facility related, i.e., they will take time and money to address. A dialogue is important in order to assist schools in prioritizing.
- ♦ Since relationships are critical it is necessary to commit time to meetings, school-related organizations, etc., in order to maintain contact with the school community and stay apprised of current issues.
- ♦ When developing a self-inspection program, flexibility is key in order to maintain a consistent workload.



## Outlook for program in the future

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the School Advisory Committee, expanding the self-inspection program, and partnering with the school community. These partnerships have proven to be the most effective tool we have found in providing a safe and healthy school environment for Spokane County's school children.



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